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### Ethnographic showcases

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## Ethnographic showcases, 1870–1930

*Raymond Corbey*

Il n'y a ni bourg, ni hameau, ni maison séparée dans l'île; Zamé a voulu que toutes les possessions d'une province fussent réunies dans une même enceinte, afin que l'oeil vigilant du commandant de la ville pût s'étendre avec moins de peine sur tous les sujets de la contrée.

D.A.F. de Sade, *Aline et Valcour*

'To see is to know' – this motto was attached to the anthropological exhibits of the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, one of the many world fairs during the era of imperialism and colonialism (Rydell 1984: 44). At these gigantic exhibitions, staged by the principal colonial powers, the world was collected and displayed. Natives from a wide range of colonized cultures quickly became a standard part of most manifestations of this kind. Together with their artifacts, houses, and even complete villages, so-called savages or primitives were made available for visual inspection by millions of strolling and staring Western citizens. Comparable places of spectacle such as zoos, botanical gardens, circuses, temporary or permanent exhibitions staged by missionary societies and museums of natural history, all exhibited other races and/or other species and testified to the imperialism of nineteenth-century nation-states.

In this chapter I will put these ethnographic exhibits into the wider context of the collecting, measuring, classifying, picturing, filing, and narrating of colonial others during the heyday of colonialism. All these modes of dealing with the exotic, with colonial otherness, functioned in a context of European hegemony, testifying to the successful imperialist expansion of nineteenth-century nation-states and to the intricate connections that developed between scientific and political practices. Of course, I cannot bypass the historical changes and national differences in exhibitionary practices in the period under study – the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century – but I will concentrate on the similarities, which in my view are predominant, arguing that it is possible to have a wide range of seemingly divergent modes of dealing with the Other within one single analytic field.

### The world on show

World fairs or international expositions (the *exposition universelle*, *Weltausstellung*) were very large-scale happenings that combined features of trade and industrial fairs, carnival, music festivals, political manifestations,

museums and art galleries. But primarily they were 'pilgrimage sites of commodity fetishism', as Walter Benjamin (1984: 441) pointedly put it. From 1851, when the first international exposition took place in London, onward, an enormous variety of industrial and technological products were exhibited, including steam-powered machines, lawn mowers, elevators, photographic cameras, mechanized weaving looms, and household appliances. In addition, colonial raw materials and products were displayed, along with archaeological artifacts. Various architectural styles were presented, and after 1885 the arts became a recurrent theme. The idea was to show progress in all fields – not only in industry, trade and transportation, but also in the arts, the sciences and culture. Meanwhile, there was no mention of poverty, sickness and oppression, or of social and international conflicts.

World fairs have been compared to gigantic potlatches, joyous ritual displays of richness and power, where possessions were given away and even destroyed in great numbers in order to gain prestige and to outdo others, as occurred among the Kwakiutl and other Indian cultures of the North American Northwest Coast (Benedict 1983: 7ff.). In both cases – world fairs and potlatches – ritualized competition, the gaining of prestige, and the reciprocal need to keep up with parties of comparable calibre played important roles. Both kinds of manifestations were large-scale, expensive festivals that – having social, economic, political, juridical, moral, and aesthetic aspects – displayed the character of a *fait social total* in the sense of Marcel Mauss, and both regulated relationships between rival groups (such as nations and large cities). Economic interests went hand in hand with cultural interests, and nationalistic ambitions were apparent notwithstanding the international character of the fairs, in which each country built its own monumental pavilion in its particular national style. The architecture was meant to impress; it could never be large, imposing, or unusual enough: the Crystal Palace (London), the Eiffel Tower (Paris), the Atomium (Brussels). The first world fair, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, held in the Crystal Palace in London in 1851, attracted 6 million visitors; the world fair in Paris in 1878, 16 million; the 1900 Paris fair, still before the era of cinema and television, 50 million.

So-called colonial exhibitions – such as the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886, the British Empire Exhibition of 1924–25, or the Exposition Coloniale in Paris in 1931 – were even more closely associated with the idea and ideal of empire. But even for the 1851 Great Exhibition, the Society of Arts had fanatically developed scenarios for, as one of its spokesmen put it, 'promoting and spreading Christianity, civilization and commerce among peoples still steeped in barbarity and idolatry – in terms of quantity nearly half of humanity' (quoted by Haltern 1971: 314). World fairs quickly became inseparable from imperialism and nationalism. For the British Exhibition at Wembley in 1924, a historical pageant was staged with fifteen thousand participants, which took three days to pass (Benedict 1983: 47). With this gigantic spectacle, accompanied by music and texts written for the occasion, and structured like a heroic epos governed by a

fundamental opposition between the civilized and the barbaric, the English people, self-consciously and full of pride, presented and represented their newly created world empire. Such manifestations are of interest in the present context, not only because colonial natives had a role to play too, but also because they express the civilizational idiom that formed the basis of contemporary views of 'primitives', tied up with imperialist ideology and social Darwinism.

In covering the Great Exhibition, the German newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung* stressed the prevalent 'spirit of encyclopaedism' (Haltern 1971: 352). In the course of their development, the encyclopaedic character of world exhibits – an explicitly stated goal – became increasingly prominent. The history of subjects such as the home, labour, transportation was shown, while an equally panoramic variety of cultures was displayed. An inventory/census of the whole world and the whole history of humankind was constructed in a way reminiscent of medieval maps of the world – *mappae mundi*, offering an encyclopaedic survey of the world as creation – or of the cabinets of curiosity of the Renaissance. During the same period, journals like the French *Le Tour du Monde*, with their synoptic and panoptic illustrations, usually copied from photographs, had a comparable function, as did photography as such, not least as put to use at the world fairs (Favrod 1989; Lederbogen 1986; Theye 1989).

In all cultures, political and religious elites tend to accumulate and flaunt their rare and precious objects from faraway places in order to gain prestige and to display their knowledgeability. Everyone from Renaissance princes and cardinals to Chinese emperors owned collections of exotic animals, objects, and even people. Something similar happened at world fairs, where not individual collectors but states, metropolises and their elites were involved. Mary Helms offers the analogy of the tribal shaman's medicine pouch holding a collection of strange objects. The more rare and exotic these objects, the more effective they were and the more they contributed to the shaman's prestige and power.

The emperor's zoo and botanical gardens, like the shaman's pouch, contained bits and pieces of the animate cosmos, power-filled natural wonders, examples of the rare, the curious, the strange, and the precious – all expressions of the unusual and the different attesting to the forces of the dynamic universe that by definition lies outside the (again by definition) controlled, socialized, civilized heartland. (Helms 1988: 166)

In each of these cases, a microcosm sampled and presented the macrocosm. The world fair can also be read as a microcosm, created by the Promethean Western middle classes, with their unlimited trust in Enlightenment ideas and the rational constructibility of the world – a world made after their own image, to European standards. Here, nature was only of secondary importance, appearing only in the shape of cultivated crops and painted backdrops; here, everything had been fabricated by man. Marx and Engels referred to the Great Exhibition as 'a pantheon in modern

Rome', where the bourgeoisie 'exhibits with self-congratulatory pride the gods it has created for itself' (quoted by Haltern 1971: 314). In high euphoria, the bourgeoisie celebrated progress, the attainment of world power, and the creation of Western middle-class culture by its own efforts – which, in its own eyes, was the purpose to which world history (and indeed cosmic evolution) had been directed from its earliest beginnings. Progress and civilization were the key concepts of these large-scale representations of middle-class 'selves' and savage 'others'. Another prominent theme was the Enlightenment ideal of universal brotherhood, connected with the Christian ideals of peace and love.

World fairs, as Carol Breckenridge (1989: 196) remarks, were part of a unitary, though not necessarily uniform, landscape of discourse and practice, providing a cultural technology for situating metropole and colony within a single analytic field, thus creating an imagined ecumene. The fairs told the story of mankind, the very same narrative that accompanied and legitimized colonial expansion. In this epic, staged by themselves, white, rational, civilized European citizens cast themselves in the role of hero.

### Savages on show

Placed alongside all kinds of objects and products, colonial natives quickly became a standard part of world fairs, for the education and entertainment of Western citizens. Not only the citizens themselves, but also the natives figured as categories in Western representations of Self, as characters in the story of the ascent to civilization, depicted as the inevitable triumph of higher races over lower ones and as progress through science and imperial conquest. Often ethnologists were ahead of their times concerning interpretations of other cultures, but Charles Rau, for one, who created the ethnological exhibits at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876, on behalf of the Smithsonian Institution, stated that:

... the extreme lowness of our remote ancestors cannot be a source of humiliation; on the contrary, we should glory in our having advanced so far above them, and recognize the great truth that progress is the law that governs the development of mankind. (quoted in Rydell 1984: 24)

Two years later, the Paris world fair of 1878 was the first one in which people from non-Western cultures were exhibited, in especially constructed pavilions and 'native villages' (*Villages indigènes*). The display of 400 natives from the French colonies Indochina, Senegal, and Tahiti met with huge success, as did the exhibits of indigenous peoples from Java, Samoa, Dahomey, Egypt, and North America itself at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

Native villages were a standard part of world fairs from 1878 onward. Equally popular were the 'foreign streets' such as the 'Rue de Caire'. Around the turn of the century, the International Anthropological Exhibit Company commercially exploited exhibitions of non-Western people in

the United States in several settings, including world fairs. At the Dutch 'Internationale Koloniale en Uitvoerhandel Tentoonstelling' in Amsterdam in 1883, natives from the Dutch East Indies and West Indies were shown. The Greater Britain Exhibition of 1899 included a 'Kaffir Kraal – A Vivid Representation of Life in the Wilds of the Dark Continent', an exhibit featuring African animals and 174 natives from several South African peoples brought under control only shortly before. They were divided into four native villages, showing their crafts, performing 'war dances', and riding on ponies. Among them were San, who characteristically were exhibited as part of the natural history of Africa, together with baboons (MacKenzie 1984: 104). Often the European impresarios travelled from one world fair to another with the same group of people – the Senegalese who constituted the well-known 'Senegalese village', for example – and had them perform at other venues and on other occasions as well.

A brochure commenting upon the 'Village from Dahomey' at the Imperial International Exhibition of 1909 stressed the violent brutality of indigenous Africa, especially Dahomey with its 'bloodthirsty potentates' and woman warriors or 'Amazons' who were one of the main attractions of the village; it praised the French intervention of 1892 with the following words:

Order and decency, trade and civilization have taken the place of rule by fear of the sword. France has placed its hand on the blackest spot in West Africa, and wiped out some of the red stain that made Dahomey a byword in the world. ... Today ... [the] days of savagery are passing away. (quoted in MacKenzie 1984: 116)

It was light against dark, order against violence, and a European nation as the bringer of civilization. The exhibited 'Amazons' – depicted as both barbarous and alluring, true personifications of the so-called Dark Continent – performed throughout Europe. When they appeared in the Moskauer Panoptikum in Frankfurt in 1899, they were introduced as 'wild females' – *wilde Weiber*. A group of women from Samoa, however, was described by the press and in brochures as a breathtakingly beautiful, always cheery, erotically permissive, and lazy people from the paradisiacal Pacific Ocean (*Plakate 1880–1914*: 257). North American Indians were similarly idealized and romanticized.

The 1909 world fair that featured the Amazons also included a native village of nomadic Kalmuks from Central Asia, brought under the control of the Russian empire shortly before. At the Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung of 1896, which led to the foundation of the Deutsches Kolonialmuseum, over a hundred natives from the German colonies were present, each group in its own carefully imitated cultural and natural setting. They had to call 'hurrah' at set times in praise of emperor and *Reich* (G. Schneider 1982: 167). Governments were keenly aware of the opportunity to publicize their colonial policies and to manipulate public attitudes toward the newly acquired territories. German, Dutch and Irish villages, among others, with

native people in traditional clothing were also (re)presented at the world fairs as part of the national exhibits, staged however, by the exhibited peoples themselves, not by their colonizers.

It seems to have been quite usual for visitors to throw money to the performing natives and for the natives to beg for it. The exhibited peoples' behaviour and movement was strictly controlled. They were presented as 'different' and forced to behave that way. At most – though not all – manifestations it was unthinkable that they should mingle spontaneously with the visitors, and usually there were few possibilities for contact between parties. The living exhibits had to stay within a precisely circumscribed part of the exhibition space, which represented their world; the boundary between this world and that of the citizens visiting and inspecting them, between wildness and civility, nature and culture, had to be respected unconditionally. All signs of acculturation were avoided so long as the natives were on show. One of my colleagues who grew up in postwar Berlin has told me about his astonishment when, as a boy, he came across an African man, whom he had seen only hours before in native attire at Castan's Panoptikum, now in European clothes on a tramcar, smoking a cigarette. Primitivity was staged in minute detail.

The desirability of 'civilizing' North American Indian peoples was an important theme at the St Louis fair, as it was at other world fairs in the United States. Their 'dull-minded and self-centered tribal existence' had to be replaced by '[the] active and constructive and broadminded life of modern humanity' (Francis 1913: 529, quoted by Benedict 1983: 50). The imposition of cultural assimilation, as typical of internal colonialism in the United States as it was of French colonialism, was less important in the English colonial regime. English visitors to French world fairs and colonial exhibitions, therefore, often expressed astonishment when confronted with indigenous people in European clothing. In St Louis, the living exhibits were typically organized on a scale from civilized to barbaric. The lower a people or race was deemed to be, the further removed it was from the 'Indian School' that marked one pole of the scale, that of civilization. Philippine Igorots and African Pygmies were situated near the pole of barbarity at the other end of the scale.<sup>1</sup> At the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, the opposition between 'wild' and 'civilized' and the desirability of civilizing peoples that were still wild was expressed by showing an old Indian in shabby traditional clothing next to his son in a neat new suit (Benedict 1983: 49ff.).

#### Hagenbeck's *Völkerschauen*

Persons from non-Western cultures appeared not only at world and colonial exhibitions, but also at special ethnographic shows called *Völkerschauen* in Germany, where this type of manifestation had proliferated since 1874. In that year Carl Hagenbeck, a dealer in wild animals in Hamburg and later director of a zoo and a circus, began exhibiting Samen – Lapps – as

'purely natural people' (*reine Naturmenschen*, Lehmann 1955) in several German cities, together with their tents, tools, weapons and other possessions, as well as reindeer. In 1876, he sent one of his collaborators to Egyptian Sudan in order to bring back Nubians and indigenous animals. This group of 'savages' with their 'wild' personalities, as Hagenbeck describes them in his autobiography (Hagenbeck 1909), was scrutinized by over thirty thousand German visitors on the first day of their appearance in Breslau. Subsequently the Nubians were exhibited in other European cities, including Paris and London.

When this venture became a success, Hagenbeck extended his profitable activities to include North American Indians, Inuit, people from India, and Zulus (*Zulukaffern*). He and other entrepreneurs also exhibited Sudanese, Bushmen, and *Somalinegerknaben* riding on ostriches; later, Dinka, Maasai, and Ashanti were recruited in Africa and brought to Europe (cf. Thode-Arora 1989: 168–78). The supply of natives closely followed the colonial conquests. Tuareg, for instance, were on exhibit in Paris within months of the French capture of Timbuktu in 1894, and natives from Madagascar appeared a year after the French occupation of that island (W. Schneider 1977: 101). The new genre quickly caught on, and ethnographic exhibits stayed very popular well into the twentieth century. Hagenbeck presented them to the middle classes with the stated intention of promoting the *Bildung* – the knowledge and culture a civilized person should possess – and stimulating the German people's nationalistic zest for colonial expansion. Often the members of *Naturvölker* ('natural peoples'), more closely associated with living nature than with civilization, were exhibited in local zoos behind bars or wire fences; fairgrounds and public parks served as settings, too. In France, the Paris Jardin d'Acclimatation, created in 1859 for the study and popularization of exotic animals and plants, became a popular setting for ethnological exhibits similar to the German ones.

For decades the German press wrote about the appearance, behaviour and nature of the foreign visitors in a very negative tone, expressing disgust and contempt for them. The general reaction of the public visiting the manifestations seems to have been the same; but near the turn of the century, press coverage began to change for the better, and more attention was given to ethnographic detail. Another reason for negative reactions to black Africans in particular, apart from deeply ingrained stereotypes of barbarity and primitivity, was the stubborn and often bloody resistance of several African peoples toward the European expansion in Africa, which was covered extensively by the European press. In the eyes of many Germans, a black African was some sort of savage monster. France consciously played on such fears in the French–German war of 1870–71 by pitting black *tirailleurs indigènes*, trained in Algeria, against German troops (Goldmann 1985: 258). In general, the more an indigenous people had resisted colonization, the more ferocity its representatives had to display when on stage.



Fear was but one of the mixed feelings German citizens experienced when visiting ethnological exhibitions. Another reaction was sexual fascination and curiosity, as is clear from contemporary press coverage and from preserved posters. Admiration of the supposedly large sexual potency of the scarcely clothed primitives competed with depreciation because of their alleged bestial lust (Goldmann 1985: 263–4; Thode-Arora 1989: 115–19). Disgust alternated with exalted attention, wonder and enchantment when Western citizens were confronted with picturesque scenes from savage life.

In the Netherlands, too, ethnological exhibitions took place. In the year 1900, for instance, the Groote Achantees Karavanen ('Large Ashanti Caravans') attracted much attention in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Nijmegen. The Ashanti, usually shown at the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris, now toured the rest of Western Europe.<sup>2</sup> In the Netherlands, they were described on a poster as 'old natives from the Gold Coasts of Africa ... Warriors, Fetish Priests, Snake-charmers, Women, Girls and Children. The most uncommon human race that has ever been seen in Europe. Most interesting for everyone' (Municipal Archives, Rotterdam). A few years earlier, *De Boschmannen of wilden van Afrika* ('the Bushmen or Savages of Africa'), as the title of the accompanying brochure reads, were on tour. Judging from their appearance, this brochure states, 'they show more similarity to Apes than to people. ... Notwithstanding their ferocity these Bushmen are nearly harmless, and even the most fearful person can approach and touch them all over with the greatest confidence' (Municipal Archives, Rotterdam). The suggestion that they could be touched indicates how close the attitudes towards these people was to the attitude towards animals. That the exhibited people were similar – metonymically, metaphorically, in appearance and behaviour – to animals, especially apes, was indeed a common perception, fed by contemporary scientific theory. In recent decades, in contrast, Bushmen once again came to play a positive role in Western imagination, similar to the one they played in the eighteenth century – that of noble savages, spontaneously and innocently enjoying a pure, natural, paradisiacal existence.

The natives performed in several roles. The American company William Foote & Co. African-American Characters exploited a show with African-Americans – as the letterhead of the firm stated – appearing as 'Savages, Slaves, Soldiers and Citizens' (Thode-Arora 1989: 41). Crafts, hunting techniques, rituals, dances, and songs were among the activities staged, as well as stereotypical 'authentic' performances such as warfare, cannibalistic acts, and headhunting. At the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St Louis, Igorots from the Philippines could be seen eating dog meat, a food taboo in the West, while African Pygmies illustrated decapitation. The above-mentioned Dahomey 'Amazons', heavily armed, simulated fights. Aborigines from Queensland, Australia, presented as *Austral. Neger*, on exhibition at the Frankfurt Zoo and elsewhere in May 1885, were described on posters as cannibals and bloodthirsty monsters – 'wirklich blutdürstige Ungeheuer'. Another poster, printed for their appearance in England,

continuing a European iconographical tradition reaching back to De Bry's late sixteenth-century *Grands Voyages* and earlier, depicts them engaged in a ferocious cannibal ritual, with the following text:

Male and female Australian cannibals / R.A. Cunningham, Director / The first and only obtained colony of these strange, savage, disfigured and most brutal race ever lured from the remote interior wilds, where they indulge in ceaseless bloody feuds and forays, to feast upon each other's flesh / The very lowest order of mankind, and beyond conception most curious to look upon. (Plakate 1880-1914: 228)

How did the exhibited individuals themselves, often more or less coerced into participation, experience and cope with the exhibitions? Many had to battle with homesickness, emotional confusion, difficulties of adjustment to the European climate and food, and vicious infections. Often they actively resisted the roles forced on them, for instance by running away, and they could be put back in harness only by force. Now and then bad treatment led to court cases. In the *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* of 1880, the prominent anthropologist and politician Rudolf Virchow described in detail how an Inuit woman whose measurements he wished to take literally ran into the walls of the room in total panic (quoted by Thode-Arora 1989: 129-30), an incident that was by no means exceptional. The percentage of those who died soon after their arrival in Europe was considerable. When the aforementioned group of Aborigines arrived in Germany in 1883, there were eight of them; in May 1885, when they appeared in the Frankfurt Zoo, five were still alive; in October 1896, when they were examined by members of the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte, there were only three survivors. The members of two Inuit families from Labrador, on exhibition in several German cities during the year 1880 with their dogs and kayaks, all succumbed to an infection in January 1881 (Plakate 1880-1914: 236). At the cemetery of Tervuren, Belgium, close to the site of the 1897 colonial exhibition, a number of Africans lie buried who were part of the 'Congolese Village' and rowed canoes on the Tervuren ponds. In some cases, however, the exhibited natives were paid very well, treated with warmth and care, and offered sightseeing tours and dinners with local prominent people.

How the individuals on display – confronted with an alien world, unfamiliar food, strange customs, a different climate – experienced and handled their situation is an important question indeed. The relative scarcity of sources concerning their intentions and feelings should not lead us to underestimate their subjectivity or to leave it understudied. Who were they? How did they think and feel? How did they negotiate their identities? How did they creatively exploit the roles they were cast into to realize their intentions and express their reactions?<sup>3</sup> How did these roles influence their conceptions of themselves and of the Western people they met? How, for instance, did Penobscot Indian Frank Loring (alias Chief Big Thunder), Micmac Indian Jeremy Bartlett (alias Doctor Lone Cloud), and

Maliseet Indian Henry Perley (alias Red Eagle) feel about their roles as itinerant Native American performers (Prins 1991)?<sup>4</sup>

The diary of one of the males from the Inuit troupe touring Germany has been preserved (Taylor 1981). Much is known about Jefke, a black African boy on exhibition at the Antwerp Zoo, as well as about Ota Benga, a Pygmy boy displayed in a cage with a chimpanzee and later with an orang-utan at the Bronx Zoo (Bieder 1991; Bradford and Blume 1993). Less is known about Klikko, 'The Wild Dancing Bushman', a Khoi-San performing in London around 1913 (Parsons 1988). Mitchell (1988, 1989) quotes reactions of Egyptian scholars visiting the 'Rue de Caire' at the Paris Exposition universelle of 1889. How did Black Elk conceive of his appearances in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show (see Neihardt 1988; Rice 1991), or Mary Alice Nelson, (alias Molly Spotted Elk), a Penobscot Indian, conceive of her dance performances in Paris, where she thrilled the public with her floor-length eagle feather headdress (McBride 1989)?<sup>5</sup> What was on the minds of the Indians from Surinam performing at the 1883 colonial exhibition in Amsterdam, who seem to have been wildly enthusiastic during the first days of exposure to their new world, but soon had to cope with boredom, sickness and the disappointment of not meeting their Dutch king as promised (Pieterse 1992: 34-5)?

### Commerce and science

Hagenbeck was certainly not the first to exhibit non-Western people for profit. Although *Völkerschauen* became very popular during the period 1870-1930 and took place on a larger scale than ever before, the phenomenon was by no means new. During the 1820s, Captain Samuel Hadlock of Maine toured Europe with a troupe of Inuit, which was exhibited in London, Hamburg, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Prague and Vienna. Among his company was a 'Maori chieftain', whom he had come across in England. When this Maori suddenly died, his head was preserved chemically, and fixed to a model of his body. 'We do not even need the Captain's word for it to be convinced,' the Austrian *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung und Unterhaltungsblatt* wrote on the occasion of the exhibition of the reconstructed Maori at Vienna, 'that this man from New Zealand, before he was taken aboard, really has eaten other people, because that's indeed the way he looks' (Goldmann 1985: 256).

In London, to give but a few more examples, 'Red Indians' could be seen in 1844; Bushmen in 1845, and again in 1847; south African 'Kaffirs' in 1850 and in 1853 - reflecting the renewed interest in that part of the world during those years. In London, as in Berlin or Paris, learned societies such as the Ethnological Society and the competing Anthropological Society showed great interest in the ethnological exhibitions. Here too, as in Germany, the general attitudes of the public were rather negative, not least under the influence of contemporary missionary propaganda. The *Times* wrote on the Bushmen in 1847:

In appearance they are little above the monkey tribe, and scarcely better than the mere brutes of the field. ... They are sullen, silent and savage – mere animals in propensity, and worse than animals in appearance. ... In short, a more miserable set of human beings – for human they are, nevertheless – was never seen. (quoted by Altick 1978: 281)

And Charles Dickens wondered: 'Is it idiosyncratic in me to abhor, detest, abominate, and abjure that noble savage?', adding that he hoped something would happen to the stove these people slept around, so that they would suffocate. In his eyes, and in the eyes of most of his contemporaries, the savage was

... a prodigious nuisance and a gross superstition ... cruel, false, thievish, murderous; addicted more or less to grease, entrails, and beastly customs; a wild animal with the questionable gift of boasting; a conceited, tiresome, bloodthirsty, monotonous humbug ... if we have anything to learn from the Noble Savage, it is what to avoid. His virtues are a fable; his happiness is a delusion; his nobility, nonsense. (Quoted by Altick 1978)

We should add, however, that in later years Dickens traded his ideas on Anglo-Saxon superiority and progress for a form of cultural relativism implying much milder views on foraging and tribal peoples.

Columbus and Hernán Cortés had already brought back Indians and Aztecs from the New World. European princes, like the Medici in Florence, had scores of aliens at their courts, as curiosities and for purposes of prestige. During the age of European expansion, virtually every generation of Europeans could see Nubians, Inuit, Saami, North American Indians, and Pygmies at fairs, in inns – like the Amsterdam 'Blaauw Jan', precursor to the Artis Zoo – and theatres or, together with exotic animals, in zoos and princely menageries. An analogous practice was that of exhibiting the insane, usually presented in cages, for an admission fee. In eighteenth-century France, insanity was seen as a decline to a state of wildness and unruly animality, associated traditionally with all that was wicked and unnatural (Foucault 1961), while at the same time there existed a whole body of publications theorizing on similarities of physical appearance between particular types of insanity and particular animal species. 'What was presented here,' as Dörner writes, as 'wild and indomitable nature, "beastliness", absolute and destructive unruliness, social danger, which, behind the bars installed by reason, could be staged the more dramatically for showing at the same time to the public reason as the necessity of controlling nature, as a constraint upon unlimited freedom and as securing the order of the state' (Dörner 1984: 22). Order was contrasted with chaos, reason with wildness.

Also comparable were the 'monsters' and 'freaks' shown at fairs, in circus sideshows, and in the amusement zones of world fairs: individuals with club feet, Siamese twins, bearded women, giants, dwarves, and so on (cf. Bogdan 1988). A famous case is that of Merrick, the 'elephant-man', an intelligent and sensitive person terribly maimed by sickness, who was exhibited in a

freak show in London at the end of the nineteenth century until a prominent surgeon took him into his custody (Montagu 1971). The so-called panopticons in large cities, such as Castan's Panoptikum and the Passagen-Panoptikum in Berlin, combined features of a museum of anatomy, a cabinet of curiosities and a horror cabinet. The way exotic animals were – and still are – shown and handled in circus performances elucidated practices of discipline and the concomitant idiom of wildness and taming that were present more implicitly in many exhibits involving people. P.T. Barnum's shows and, somewhat later, the German Circus Sarrasani for decades had ethnological acts on their programmes, often combined with acrobatics.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exhibitions of live specimens were increasingly reframed in terms of science, especially physical anthropology and natural history. Aside from their entertainment and curiosity value their educational value came to be stressed more and more. Hagenbeck for instance advertised his show as an 'anthropological-zoological exhibition' (*anthropologisch-zoologische Ausstellung*). In many ways exhibitions of human individuals were anyhow related to scientific practices and purposes. The lunatic asylums where the insane were put on show were in the process of being medicalized; what was monstrous or exotic was often as interesting from a scientific point of view as it was shocking or fascinating to the general public. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Khoi-Khoi ('Hottentot') woman Saartjie Baartmann was put on show when alive, and dissected by the famous Cuvier when dead. A mould of her body was then exhibited – in fact until a few years ago, at the Paris Musée de l'Homme – as was, half a century later, the skeleton of the Tasmanian woman Truganini, who was cremated and committed to the waves only in the 1970s. Anthropologists used to be represented on the committees heading the anthropological sections of world fairs, often quarrelling with those who wished to cater more to commercial than to scientific or educational interests.

In anthropometric and psychometric laboratories at the world fairs, visitors could witness and even take part in scientific research on racial characteristics. Phrenology, craniology, physiognomy and anthropometry shared the assumption that in the outward shape and physical appearance of the body the inner character – of different races, but also of criminals, prostitutes, deviants – was manifest. The outward shape, therefore, had to be measured and mapped meticulously (cf. Sekula 1986). Particularly manifest in this context are the interconnections between exhibiting colonial natives and scientifically collecting, measuring, classifying and filing them. At the same time, anthropological societies and museums of natural history accumulated tens of thousands of native skulls.<sup>6</sup> Saartjie Baartmann and Truganini are typical cases. According to contemporary views of the genetic variation of mankind, Khoi-Khoi, Tasmanians, Australian Aborigines, and several native peoples from Tierra del Fuego stood closest to the apes and prehistoric apemen in the racial hierarchy, and therefore were outstanding examples of 'contemporary ancestors' and 'missing links'.

Exhibited colonial natives typically had to appear before anthropological societies such as those of Oxford and London or the Société d'Anthropologie in Paris. The Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte used to organize special sessions for this purpose, often at the same locations as the ethnological shows. On 28 March 1896, for instance, a number of members of the Berlin anthropological society studied an 'authentic Arabic harem' at the Passagen-Panoptikum (Theye 1989: 103). Usually anthropometric measurements and photographs were taken on such occasions, and it will come as no surprise that the objects of research, who were urged to undress, were often uneasy or even reluctant. The manufacture of plaster casts of different parts of the body was another research activity, as were linguistic and ethnomusicological observations. The learned societies gave certificates of authenticity of people exhibited, and suggested new target groups that would serve the financial needs of the impresarios as fully as their own scientific interests.

So science, commerce and imperialism went hand in hand. When Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show performed in Paris during the summer of 1889, Prince Roland Bonaparte, ethnologist and anthropologist, was present continuously in order to question and measure the Cheyenne and Sioux who took part in the show. J.A. Jacobsen, a Norwegian and one of the most important collaborators of the Hagenbeck family, also collected for the Berlin Museum of Ethnology, and supervised the manufacture of ethnographical dioramas featuring wax, plaster or papier-mâché mannequins. These were fabricated with the help of life casts and photographs, and showed dramatic scenes from ritual and daily life. The Hagenbecks maintained close relations with the Hamburg Museum für Völkerkunde, to the benefit of both parties. And museums of ethnography or so-called colonial museums often originated from world fairs that, despite their many aspects, were first and foremost commercial happenings: the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro – now called the Musée de l'Homme – in Paris, for instance, was created on the occasion of the 1878 world fair (Dias 1991), while the Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika at Tervuren, Belgium, resulted from the colonial exhibition of 1897.

William Schneider (1977: 98–9) signals a certain shift back to the traditional amusement-oriented character of – European – ethnological exhibits, which he situates at about 1890. In order to increase profits, the organizers began to stress the unusual and the bizarre, and to add spectacular performances, such as mock battles or cannibalistic rituals. What had begun to develop into a means of scientifically educating and edifying the public about faraway peoples and their customs turned into a form of amusement again, yet without impeding the persistence of a third function, that of political and imperialistic propaganda. Similar differences existed between the official ethnographic exhibitions and the less scholarly orchestrated midway amusement zones at North American world fairs, which also served as venues for ethnographic exhibitions and spectacles.<sup>7</sup>

Science and imperialism went hand in hand, and so, of course, did missionary activities and imperialism. I do not know of any human show-cases within the context of missionary propaganda, but other practices of categorizing, picturing, and exhibiting uncivilized, 'heathen' peoples had much in common with more profane happenings. During the first half of the twentieth century, many European missionary museums and countless missionary exhibitions, Roman Catholic as well as Protestant, tried to persuade their visitors to take certain views and certain actions concerning colonially dominated non-Western, non-Christian peoples. Such exhibitions, *permanent or temporary*, were staged by missionary societies with the help of objects, photographs, maps, and sometimes dressed mannequins or busts. On such occasions, the well-known narrative plots and metaphors, slightly modified, return: civilized or Christian whites bringing the light of civilization, or religion, to savages, or pagans, in the name of some higher instance, be it Progress or God. Missionary photography for propagandistic goals showed characters and scenes from such narratives.

On 24 December 1924, Pope Pius XI opened the World Missionary Exhibition at the Vatican, which attracted over 750,000 visitors during the following year. There was a Hall of Propaganda, a Hall of the Holy Land as the Cradle of Christianity, a Hall of the History of the Missions, and a hall dedicated to quantitative data concerning the missions. All these halls were crammed with ethnographical objects showing the customs and morals of the heathen cultures that were the target of the Roman Catholic civilizing and religious offensive, neatly arranged according to ethnologist Father Wilhelm Schmidt's theory of *Kulturkreise* and their historical development (Kilger 1925). Rome was represented as the centre of the world – a role that on medieval world maps was still reserved to Jerusalem, and in imperialist discourse was given to the metropolises of the leading imperialist nation-states. Roman Catholic missionary pageants in Belgium, the southern Netherlands, and elsewhere in Europe during the first decades of the twentieth century, with locals made up and dressed to represent black Africans, are reminiscent of Indian painter George Catlin's Indian Show in England during the 1840s, featuring native English people dressed up as North American Indians, or of the show in honour of King Henri II in the year 1550 near Rouen, France, where French sailors performed Brazilian Indians.

The 1930s witnessed the decline of the ethnological exhibition, at least in the specific form it had taken until then. Criticism of imperialism and racism increased, and ethnographic shows were found objectionable on moral grounds.<sup>8</sup> Ethnographic films and numerous scientific, semi-scientific, and pseudo-scientific anthropological treatises, abundantly illustrated with photographs, took over much of the function of ethnological exhibits, as did colonial and missionary propaganda films. The increasing acculturation of colonial natives thwarted the creation of romantic or depreciating scenes of their natural lives. Recruiting exhibit groups in the German colonies became very difficult after 1901 because of new laws

and regulations, and the First World War and its aftermath complicated things even more. During the 1930s, the *Völkerschauen* were prohibited by the National Socialists, who feared they would increase the sympathy of the German people for other races.

None the less, manifestations that are quite similar in several respects have persisted until today; for instance, the presence of Maori at the Te Maori exhibition at New York or of Sulawesi Toradja building a rice barn at the Toradja exhibition in the London Museum of Mankind during the 1980s. As a counterpart to exotic native villages at late nineteenth-century world fairs, a 'Dutch city' was opened in Nagasaki in spring 1992, featuring four miles of canals with full-scale replicas of well-known Dutch buildings such as the Utrecht Cathedral. The cinema, television, and tourism also share certain functions with the *Völkerschau*, which was often recommended as an opportunity to visit faraway cultures.

### The story and the gaze

It is not difficult to show the pivotal role of narrative structures in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century world fairs, museums, or missionary exhibitions. Narrative plots are as pervasive in the civilizing, imperialist, missionary, and scientific discourses of the period as in the three-dimensional spectacles that, to a considerable degree, were governed by these discursive activities. As many contemporary book titles suggest, the history of mankind was narrated essentially as a heroic ascent toward the natural and ultimate goal of cosmic evolution: the industrial civilization of white, European, middle-class citizens of the nineteenth century. Other races followed the same path, it was postulated – especially in evolutionist ethnology, which was a scientific manifestation of the discourse on progress – but lagged behind culturally and physically. Imperialist expansion was represented in terms of a social Darwinist natural history, and European hegemony as a natural and therefore desirable development. There has been some controversy on the question of whether the master narrative of progress and civilization is essentially a secularized avatar of the Christian idea of world history as God's working, but in any case, it is not formulated in religious terms. The implied development is from a lack of civilization to a civilized state, from wildness to civility, achieved heroically by the white, Caucasian race under its own power, and by the other races with the help of the Caucasian race, insofar at least as their constitution allowed them to progress. The stagewise development from savagery through barbarism to civilization was suggested by organizing museum and world fair exhibits into evolutionary sequences.

Sekula's (1986: 58) stress on the spirit of optical empiricism and encyclopaedism of pictorial archives, with their purely iterative character, is heuristically useful and certainly justified to a certain degree; but in many contexts of collecting, filing and exhibiting, an order was imposed on the data that went beyond mere iteration and taxonomy. In many cases, all



essential ingredients of the story, or at least of a certain type of story, are present: a beginning where some desirable good is lacking; an end that is somehow implied teleologically by that beginning; acting subjects; strife and struggle; and other plot elements. World fairs and museums not only categorized peoples, races, cultures, species and artifacts by creating taxonomies, but also ordered them syntagmatically, creating the well-known plots of civilized/Christian whites bringing light to the savage/heathen in the name of some higher instance. The same goes for many photographs from colonial contexts, showing moments from the story they presuppose and illustrate (Corbey 1988, 1989, 1990). Those well-known plots – flexible, capable of incorporating disparate elements, of outdoing alternative readings – are as pervasive in nineteenth-century civilizing, imperialist, missionary, and scientific discourses as in the spectacles and pictures that were governed by these discursive activities. The nineteenth century saw the proliferation of historicized, evolutionary frameworks of representation – of artifacts and natural history specimens, of human, racial and national origins.

One aspect of these spectacles, pictures and narratives was that they neutralized the cognitive dissonance and the threat to Western middle-class identity constituted by the baffling cultural difference of new peoples. Colonial others were incorporated narratively. In a *mise-en-intrigue*, they were assigned their roles in the stories told by museum exhibitions, world fairs, and colonial postcards. They were cast as contemporary ancestors, receivers of true civilization and true religion. The radical difference of the other was made sense of and thus warded off by a narrative discordant concordance between 'civilized' and 'savage'. Money, trade and exchange mediated between peoples (cf. Hinsley 1991: 362), but on another level stories were created in order to mediate the basic contradiction between the two perceived states of mankind. Here I concur with Lévi-Strauss's interpretation of myth as a struggle with contradictions or paradoxes, as a syntagmatic mediation of paradigmatic oppositions.<sup>9</sup> Carol Breckenridge (1989: 211) points out the analogy between the building of private collections by colonial officials (creating an illusion of cognitive control over a colonial experience that might otherwise have been disturbingly chaotic) and the world fair as a reminder of the orderliness of empire which consolidated the sense of imperial knowledge and control in the imagined Victorian ecumene.

But the resultant concordance will never be complete; the attempt to harmonize is ultimately bound to fail. For as the plot develops, the initial discordance between civilized and primitive, white and black, Christian and heathen, is slowly, but never totally overcome. Struggle develops into contracts, but some antagonism and difference is necessary all the way, to keep the story going. The story familiarizes and exoticizes at the same time.<sup>10</sup> Also, on a different level – that of the citizen's personal experience – the other seems to preserve an elusive quality; he or she never yields completely to incorporation within the framework of the familiar,

stubbornly resisting a textualizing closure of spontaneous experience, of fascination, of wonder.<sup>11</sup>

To return now to the 1893 world fair motto we began with, 'To see is to know': of course we do not know how things are by simply looking. The eye is not innocent. The motto succinctly expresses an underlying ideology that is at work in a range of seemingly disparate practices in colonial times: photography, colonialist discourse, missionary discourse, anthropometry, collecting and exhibiting, and so on. What people saw, rather than reality as it is, was to a considerable extent reality as perceived, as actively constructed by images, conceptions, native taxonomies, stories and motivational attitudes in the spectator's mind (compare Mason 1990). The perceived order was an imposed one; the citizen's gaze on alien people was determined to a considerable degree by stories and stereotypes in their mind.

'Visualization and spatialization', Fabian writes in his study of the central role of the gaze and the visual in the history of anthropology,

[became] a program for the new discipline of anthropology. There was a time when this meant, above all, the exhibition of the exotic in illustrated travelogues, museums, fairs, and expositions. These early ethnological practices established seldom articulated but firm convictions that presentations of knowledge through visual and spatial images, maps, diagrams, trees and tables are particularly well suited to the description of primitive cultures. (Fabian 1983: 121)

In this context, in line with our analysis of ethnological exhibitions, he stresses the ideological effects of *visualism* as a cognitive style. What is seen, the objectified Other, is looked at as coming not only from faraway places, but also, and more importantly, from a different, allochronic time. Fabian shows how a temporal gap is constructed between citizens and their 'contemporary ancestors', 'how anthropology has managed to maintain distance, mostly by manipulating temporal coexistence through the denial of coevalness' (Fabian 1983: 121). This occurred in anthropology, just as it did in the political ideology of imperialism, in Christian discourse on heathens and the mission, at world fairs, and in certain photographic practices.

When modern anthropology began to construct its Other in terms of topoi implying distance, difference, and opposition, its intent was above all, but at least also, to construct ordered Space and Time – a cosmos – for Western society to inhabit, rather than 'understanding other cultures', its ostensible vocation. (Fabian 1983: 111–12)

Besides plotting, there is a second aspect of the storied nature of the imperial imagination that has relevance to a proper understanding of ethnological exhibitions. It has to do with the encyclopaedic character of world fairs. 'As with other dimensions of the show,' Greenhalgh notes (1988: 87), 'the imperial dimension was underpinned by the belief that it was possible to present a complete knowledge, to create a physical

encyclopedia capable of capturing and explaining a total world view.' What is interesting here is the cognitive position ascribed to the visitors: they are assumed to be situated high above the world they gaze upon. On a very basic level, activities such as narrating, taking pictures, or just plain looking create the illusion of the surveyability or transparency of reality, connected with the suggestion that those who narrate, take pictures, or look, find themselves in the privileged position of a panoptic spectator. In spontaneous visual perception, we already tend to experience ourselves as the natural centre of the world we see – a world that seems to be organized around the onlooker as its pivot. In other words, perspective is more than a neutral mathematical projection on external space. All three activities – looking, taking pictures, narrating – are perspectivistic, not only in a literal sense, as in the case of looking or photographing, but also cognitively, emotionally and ideologically. External reality is constructed from and around a central position, that of the onlooker, the photographer, the narrator – and also that of the citizen roaming the world fair. These spectators by their very activity seem to be panoptic, omniscient; their point of view is or seems to be panoramic, that of a bird's eye rather than that of a frog's eye. The narrator, hovering high above the plot, oversees time and space to a considerable degree, having relatively free access to what narrative characters are doing at different times and places. This panoptic gaze is very wide, and might indeed be coextensive with story or narrative as a highly general discourse structure, operating not only in fiction and literature, but also in the sciences and in philosophy, in religious practices and in everyday conversation.

The position of the narrator is usually external to the story, somewhere above the narrated events, permitting an overview of space and time, although it may be more limited, tied to one of the characters in the represented events and part of these.<sup>12</sup> External narrators find themselves in an excellent position to assign significance and value to the events and characters, including, in the case of a typical nineteenth-century master narrative, their own heroic role, natural superiority, and unshakable moral and cognitive orientation. 'The panoramic approach lays out the whole world conceptually in a Linnean classification or evolutionary scheme, or experientially in a scenic effect. ... The view is comprehensive, extensive, commanding, aggrandizing. As a prospect, it holds in it scenarios for future action' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1991: 413). Panoramic landscape descriptions in novels or travel accounts, as well as landscape photographs and turn-of-the-century postcards, often embody a discourse of empire and domination, with the seer as a 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' (Pratt 1988; cf. Fabian 1983: 118–23), in firm control of the seen. The same gaze – self-confident, panoptic, voyeuristic – is to be found in many photos of colonial natives. 'There is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera,' Susan Sontag (1984: 7) has remarked, and indeed taking pictures was another means of taking possession of native peoples and their lands, as was narration.

A fine example of the encyclopaedic urge in an imperialist context was an ambitious project the Asiatic Society of Bengal tried to realize in Calcutta in 1865: a synoptic exhibition of living representatives of the races of the Old World (or at least of India), to be visited primarily by scientists (Falconer 1984–6). The idea was that of a kind of panopticon, as we know it from the writings of Jeremy Bentham and Michel Foucault. The spirit of the project once again was one of optical empiricism, as expressed by the Chicago motto 'To see is to know'.<sup>13</sup> The effort failed. A somewhat meagre but similar outcome realized instead of the exhibit of life specimens was constituted by E.T. Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (1872), illustrated with lithographs based on photographs, and the eight-volume *The People of India: a Series of Photographic Illustrations with Descriptive Letterpress of the Races and Tribes of Hindustan* (Watson and Kaye 1868–75), commissioned by the British government, both covering the native peoples from this part of the British empire. In a comparable way, richly illustrated publications like Karl Ernst von Baer's *Types principaux des différentes races humaines dans les cinq parties du monde* (1861) proffered the 'photographic museum of the human races' that had been postulated theoretically twenty years before by E.R.A. Serres (1845: 243; cf. Theye 1989) in France and had quickly become a quite common ideal, all the more so because it was felt that soon it would be too late to realize it. In the year 1872, the German ethnologist Adolf Bastian also formulated the project of 'a photographic museum of the human races', which was indeed created later by the Berliner Gesellschaft für Ethnologie, Anthropologie und Urgeschichte; tens of thousands of accumulated photographs were destroyed during the Second World War (Theye 1989).

In addition to illustrating the synoptic theme, the project of a photographic census of humanity also brings out nicely the role of photography in the complex of practices regarding colonial subjects: collecting, scrutinizing, measuring, categorizing, filing, controlling, narrating. The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the quick rise of photography as another machinery of capturing and displaying the world. Here, too, we come across the illusion of authenticity, of unmediated encounter. Time and again the unbiased, true character of the photographic picture was stressed; photos were seen as windows on the world, as unmediated and therefore unbiased copies of nature itself. Photography was applied on a large scale in many scientific disciplines, in a spirit of optical empiricism. While the prospering middle classes of Western industrial societies presented themselves honorifically in self-congratulatory studio portraits, hundreds of thousands of photos of their others – other races, criminals, prostitutes, the insane, deviants – functioned in the context of repression. Publications like *The People of India*, Carl Damman's *Anthropologisches-Ethnologisches Album in Photographien* (c. 1872), or, somewhat later, the scenes-and-types postcard genre, were matched by photographic albums with 'types' of criminals. In this context, the needs of nation states went hand in hand with scientific purposes. Breckenridge (1989: 195–6) points out

that agencies such as archives, libraries, surveys, revenue bureaucracies, folklore and ethnographic agencies, censuses and museums provided a context for the surveillance, recording, classifying, and evaluating called for by the new order of nineteenth-century nation-states with their imperializing and disciplinary bureaucracies – whether it concerned colonies abroad or criminals and slums at home.

Tony Bennett, in an argument that in many ways parallels and in other ways complements the argument developed here, has unravelled relations between power and knowledge in the development of what he appropriately calls an 'exhibitionary complex'. This encompasses museums of art, history and natural science; dioramas and panoramas; national and international exhibitions; arcades and department stores, serving as 'linked sites for the development and articulation of new disciplines (history, biology, art history, anthropology) and their discursive formations (the past, evolution, aesthetics, man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision' (Bennett 1988: 73).

### Conclusion

We have explored some of the complex interdependencies between the colonialist, scientific, and visual appropriation of cultural others in the context of world fairs and ethnographic exhibits. Persons from tribal cultures, on show in the West, were commodified, labelled (Bouquet and Branco 1988), scripted, objectified, essentialized, decontextualized, aestheticized, fetishized. They were cast in the role of backward, allochronic contemporary ancestors, receivers of true civilization and true religion in the stories told by museums, world fairs, and imperialist ideologies, thus becoming narrative characters in the citizen's articulation of identity – of Self and Other. Their own voices and views – ironically often as ethnocentric and omniscient as Western voices and views – were neutralized. Fitting cultural Others into narrative plots, we suggested, was a way the citizen's panoptic eye/I dealt with their wondrous, disturbing difference without annihilating this difference completely. These plots came with the illusion of the panoptic position of an omniscient spectator, functioning as another strategy of power – the illusion that 'To see is to know'.

Over the last centuries the 'we'-group, as an emic category of Western middle classes characterized by true humanity, has been expanding continuously to include many categories that were formerly excluded or considered ambiguous: women, slaves, peasants, the poor, and non-Western peoples.<sup>14</sup> In this chapter, occasional reference has been made to analogies between how other races and species were thought of and treated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By now, the boundary of the human species has been reached and, in fact, is being questioned – not least as to its moral significance – and transgressed. The discussion is now shifting towards zoos, circuses, dolphin shows, bioindustry and animal experiments; towards 'simian Orientalism' (Haraway 1989) and other forms

of anthropocentrism. It would seem that our observations on ethnocentric/Eurocentric ethnographic exhibits during the heyday of colonialism are in many ways readily extendable to present-day forms, in theory and practice, of anthropocentrism and so-called speciesism.

### Notes

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1. In this context, Ivan Karp's analytical distinction between exoticizing and assimilating strategies of exhibition is relevant (in Karp and Lavine 1991: 375ff.); both strategies are examples of the cognitive strategy of assimilation – as opposed to accommodation – in the sense of Piagetian developmental psychology.

2. For a survey of ethnographic exhibits in the Jardin d'Acclimatation, see W. Schneider 1977.

3. A fruitful line of analysis not exploited here might pursue the infamous character of similar trades and professions; cf. Blok (in press).

4. Prins (1991) argues that these early showmen functioned as cultural mediators between dominant Euro-American society and their own respective native communities, and that their performances inspired the imagery currently used to express ethnic self-identity among tribespeople in the Northeast.

5. Bunny McBride (Manhattan, Kansas; cf. McBride 1989) is writing a biography of Molly Spotted Elk based on her diaries.

6. The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, for instance, at this moment harbours the remains of about forty thousand non-Western individuals.

7. As remarked before, I am trying to bring out the general character of ethnographic exhibits in the period under consideration more than differences between nations, over time, or between types of manifestation. For an analysis of national differences, see Benedict 1991.

8. One would also expect conflicts between the scholarly and the popular imagination to have increased towards the end of the period 1870–1930 with the advent, in anthropology, of paradigms critical of evolutionistic anthropology.

9. At the same time, as may be clear to insiders, I take some inspiration from the structuralist narratology of A.J. Greimas and the Paris School – without necessarily subscribing to all its presuppositions, however. For an equally powerful but more radical, poststructuralist, analytical approach to exhibitionary practices, see Bal 1992.

10. Here again, Karp's distinction between exoticizing and assimilating strategies is relevant; see Note 1.

11. Stephen Greenblatt's (1991) stress on the the enduring fascination with 'the marvellous' complements the narratologically inspired perspective developed here.

12. In contemporary narratology, the narrator's perspective is analysed in terms of internal and external 'focalization'; compare Genette 1972, and Bal 1991, who stresses the ideological effects of focalization not only in texts but also in pictures and museums, developing the theory of focalization into a powerful tool of cultural criticism.

13. I am here, indeed, indirectly and loosely drawing upon certain ideas from the work of Michel Foucault, which has proved to be inspiring and heuristically useful in the field of cultural studies (cf. Mitchell 1988, 1989), despite its lack of historical precision, its too-sweeping generalizations, and its tendency towards sometimes rather obscure rhetoric.

14. Even early hominids may be included in this group. A poster announcing the 1989 exhibition 'Archéologie de la France: 30 ans de découvertes' at the Grand Palais in Paris shows a *Homo erectus* man with a modern baby on his knee, the caption reading 'Nous avons tous 400.000 ans', which only twenty years ago would still have been unthinkable.

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